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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000651

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/03/2014

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SUBJECT: SECURITY CONCERNS IN LIGHT OF ATTACKS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Classified By: Ambassador Marguerita D. Ragsdale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with Minister of Cooperation, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, May 3, to discuss Embassy concerns in light of the attack in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, on May 1st. Ambassador explained that the Embassy has assessed that its security posture should remain the same but raised concern about the potential for violent public reaction in Djibouti. Youssouf expressed the Government of Djibouti's shared concern in maintaining the peace and security of U.S. citizens in country. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Ambassador spoke with Minister of Cooperation, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, on potential security concerns for the Embassy and American citizens in light of the terrorist attack in Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, and recent televised reports of prisoner mistreatment in Iraq. Ambassador was clear that security measures at the Embassy were deemed adequate and should remain the same, but the attack in Yanbu raised concern about the possibility of smaller scale attacks. Ambassador said that because of publicly expressed concerns that the attack in Yanbu may have been a reaction to televised reports in the Arab world of mistreatment of Iraqi detainees, she wanted to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of support of security related measures. Ambassador states that she was unsure if the attack in Yanbu is an indication of a new trend of attacks aimed at smaller Western targets, rather than a group, or an anomaly.

3. (C) Youssouf responded that the government understood the concerns and stated, for example, that it was not in the common interest of Djibouti and the U.S. to encourage public demonstrations because of their tendency to get out of hand. He explained that in Djibouti City all of the vital government targets are located so close together that if something was triggered at one site, all would be in danger. He agreed that security is a concern in light of the Yanbu incident and reports of prisoner mistreatment. Youssouf said that while popular upheaval of this kind may be possible in other locations, Djiboutians have not had a history of such expressive feelings. He commented that there was indeed a feeling of dismay and sympathy but the culture of Djibouti is more reflective and less spontaneous in their reactions.

4. (C) Youssouf continued that he had just been at the National Assembly answering questions about the benefit Djibouti derives from the American presence. It is important, he said, to remind the Djiboutian people of this. He said the American image in Djibouti is quite good and that the government is engaged in a campaign to promote the good that the Americans have done. The Government hopes that it will show the American interest in Djibouti as that of a friend and not possessing hegemonic intentions. Youssouf indicated, however, his view that the more Iraq stabilizes, the less likely events such as Yanbu will occur. He continued that stability needed to come as quickly as possible to Iraq.

RAGSDALE